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Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by S. M. Sehgal Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34491 (E) 250510

Please recycle

Statement

Righting the future of women

S. M. Sehgal Foundation has been working in Mewat, India, for the past 10 years and pro-women initiatives form one of the main guiding principles of the foundation. The organization pursues a holistic approach called integrated sustainable village development, tackling the interrelated constraints, needs and opportunities of poor villages in a holistic way. Integrated sustainable village development rests firmly on the belief that to be effective over the longer term, the women and village poor must be empowered to participate in advancing their own development. The Institute of Rural Research and Development endeavours to build a just and equitable society for women in rural Mewat.

Gender equity trainings in the villages. The Institute of Rural Research and Development conducts training programmes to capacitate and sensitize men and women in the villages about gender equity. In addition, the training aims to affect attitudinal changes in men, wherein they accept women as equals and encourage their participation in all spheres of life, which is essential for the development of society. For women, the training aims to promote self-awareness, assertiveness and confidence. The issues comprising the content of the training programme are: the difference between sex and gender; the need for gender equity in society; gender roles and stereotypes; perceptions about roles and responsibilities and gender activity profiling; recognition of women's productive roles; equitable access and control over resources for both men and women; women's rights and women's roles in village governance and politics.

Adolescent girls programme. The Institute of Rural Research and Development adolescent girls programme tries to address the issue of literacy and social resignation among adolescent girls. It aims at providing basic literacy and at developing life skills among adolescent girls. It provides a platform for girls to express themselves and to feel important as individuals. This platform for self-expression through interactive sessions provides an opportunity for adolescents to come together and develop a positive peer culture, share their experiences and develop comradeship, which is missing in their life. They gradually build confidence and interaction skills and gain knowledge about reproductive health and legal rights, which ultimately lead to a change in their attitudes and practices and to better hygiene.

Ensuring participation of women in institutions at the local level. The Institute of Rural Research and Development aims to create a strengthened and empowered rural society by building the capacities of rural communities, with a special focus on institutions at the local level, like including village education committees, local governments and village health committees. In all these committees special emphasis is placed on ensuring the active participation of women.

Policy, advocacy on women's rights. The Institute of Rural Research and Development policy centre participated in a 16-day international campaign on violence against women. The aim of the campaign was to initiate discussions on such issues as the political participation of women, domestic violence and the dowry, which are never openly discussed in the community, and to make women aware of their rights. The campaign provided a platform for discussion on various issues related to women's empowerment.

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Statement submitted by Radin Institute for Family Health Education and Promotion, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34497 (E) 260510

Please recycle

Statement

Youth and the Millennium Development Goals: today's investment for future success

According to the *United Nations World Youth Report* in 2007, today's youth group is the best educated youth generation in history and a tremendous resource for national development. Today's young men and women are an evolving generation that sees the future with an optimistic view and a solid commitment to vitalize their societies. The major goal of this statement is to remind all stakeholders that investing in youth is a priority that will provide a long-term and solid platform towards meeting all the Millennium Development Goals.

Any development initiative should provide tangible opportunities for young people to participate in society. Today's young men and women need different tools for a successful and safe transition into independent life and in order to become responsible and productive adult members of their communities. Improving the lives of young people is vital to the implementation of all the Millennium Development Goals, from education and employment to health and gender equity. Young people should not struggle with the poverty, violence and lack of education that destroys their ambition to be part of the success in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Governments and international and national agencies need to ensure that today's youth, regardless of gender, will develop its full potential, be treated equally and have educational experiences that guarantee its success in the future.

Young people are a key asset to eliminating gender disparity. In particular, empowering young women makes them strong partners with men to help promote gender awareness in future generations. Gender inequality is deeply rooted in culture in both the developed and developing world, but young people can be powerful agents of change. Young people recognize that overcoming today's challenges requires equal partnerships between men and women. The empowerment of women is not a theoretical concept; it is a substantial strategy that should be linked to all of the Millennium Development Goals. All Governments should establish specific gender equity tests that are sensitive to youth in all initiatives across all the Millennium Development Goals. Young men need to recognize women as equal partners who can take over non-traditional roles and grow up to become leaders of society.

Targeting young men's involvement in gender equity policies is essential. It requires changes in norms and beliefs in the communities. Therefore, programmes are needed to educate male high school and college students to encourage them to be more involved in family activities. They should be educated about the unfairness of gender inequity. This education should be incorporated into programmes promoting positive images of men in non-traditional roles, teaching them skills related to the domestic activities of the family. The media has an enormous role in establishing social norms and beliefs. Thus, gender stereotypes should be replaced by images with positive messages, such as promoting positive young male and female role models around family life and showing both parents being active in family caregiving and domestic work.

Young people are a valuable source of social capital for development to 2015 and beyond. Without recognizing this reality, all actions to implement the Millennium Development Goals will be inefficient and the outcome will be temporary and volatile.

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Development Cooperation Forum

Statement submitted by Nord-Sud XXI, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34503 (E) 070610

Please recycle

Statement

Nord-Sud XXI places special importance on the heightened attention given to the Millennium Development Goals, which are truly standards of achievement by which the United Nations commitment to bring social justice to the world will be measured.

We reiterate, as many Governments and members of civil society have done, the need for sufficient investment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We welcome the commitments by some States to provide enhanced resources, especially in areas related to poverty reduction and the reduction of women and children's morality. The provision of adequate resources for achieving the Millennium Development Goals is an obligation of all States, both in collaboration with the United Nations and separately, which flows directly from articles 55 and 56 of the Charter.

Nord-Sud XXI also recalls that almost a quarter century ago the General Assembly declared the right to development as "an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized". Furthermore, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and numerous regional human rights instruments commit State parties to ensuring economic, social and cultural rights, including labour rights and rights to health, education and an adequate standard of living.

We also recall the commitments undertaken by States in the Monterrey Consensus and several times since then, which remain unfulfilled, but which constitute authoritative interpretations of their legal obligations. In words, the failure of a State to meet its commitments to finance development is evidence of that State's failure to sufficiently respect its international legal obligation to cooperate to achieve development and respect for human rights.

Finally, Nord-Sud XXI has the following recommendations:

- That a task force be established to review the consistency of policies and principles, good practices and recommendations adopted by the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development for their consistency with international law, including international human rights law
- This task force could include at least five or seven experts drawn from States and civil society, including academic institutions, with due attention for diverse geographical representation
- This task force could be based either in New York or Geneva (where the Human Rights Council is based) and hosted by a permanent mission on a rotating basis or by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Programme or the International Labour Organization
- This task force should be tasked with both reviewing the work of the High-level Dialogue for its consistency with international law, especially international human rights law, as well as with suggesting ways in which the law can be used to strengthen the work of the High-level Dialogue.

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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Tides Center, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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10-34509 (E) 140610

Please recycle

Statement

Today, women represent 70 per cent of the 1.2 billion people living in poverty throughout the world. Inequality, with respect to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, is a central fact of women's lives in every region of the world and is a result of discrimination against women and women's lower status within patriarchal societies. In order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals aimed at advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women, it is critical for the nations of the world to promote and reflect a human rights perspective that embraces women's human rights as fundamental to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Ten years after the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, women continue to lag behind men on most development indicators. While the global economic crisis has prevented some progress in terms of development, even here the impacts will disproportionately burden women. If gender equality and the empowerment of women, crucial to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, are to be achieved, States must urgently prioritize the fulfilment of women's economic and social rights. It is the realization of rights that holds the key to development, by creating the space for women to claim and assert basic needs in terms of State's obligations and not simply as inspirational benchmarks. In order to make the most significant and meaningful inroads in addressing the perpetuation of discrimination against women, and its continuing role in reinforcing women's poverty, it is critical to continue to underscore the need for legal recognition of the rights to substantive equality and non-discrimination, particularly in relation to economic and social rights. True and sustainable development will only be achieved when human rights principles, norms and standards are upheld as a matter of course for everyone, including women. In particular, in order for women's human rights to be upheld, States must be called upon to meet their legal obligations under such international human rights treaties as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The successful implementation of both of these treaties is the key to the effective realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

Under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international human rights standards, Governments around the world are obligated to ensure that women's rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. In order to do this, Governments must strengthen national legal protections for women's economic, social and cultural rights, and do so on the basis of non-discrimination and equality, allowing women to participate meaningfully in the process. The existing international legal framework provides an important tool for accountability and for measuring the extent and adequacy of implementation of these goals. Recognizing the critical links that exist between women's economic, social and cultural rights and women's equality is the key to improving the lives of women all around the world and to realizing the crucial benchmarks included in the Millennium Development Goals.

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Item 14 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Social and human rights questions: social development

Statement submitted by Associazione Amici dei Bambini, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34515 (E) 140610

Please recycle

Statement

Nowadays, is it becoming harder for young people to be integrated in the work environment, especially in developing countries. A particular target that is experiencing this problem is the one of "care leavers". These are young people without a stable family who are leaving or have recently left alternative care or residential placements after reaching a legally set age (usually 18 years of age). The number of "care leavers" is constantly rising, a clear sign of the increasing number of children growing up in alternative care. Transnational research conducted in Europe confirms this tendency.[1] By supporting this particular group, the following Millennium Development Goals will be addressed: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowerment of women; reducing child mortality; and developing a global partnership for development.

Recommendations:

- End poverty and hunger: encourage institutions to enforce services and policies that guarantee support for young care leavers after leaving the child protection system (life skills training, psycho-social support, home maintenance, job searching); launch public campaigns seeking to eliminate discrimination and stigmas against care leavers; promote funds for programmes that aim to support social integration for young care leavers (e.g., housing programmes).
- Universal education: undertake systematic reform of training and education programmes for care leavers and young people in general; promote access to university education.
- Global partnerships: encourage partnerships with the private sector to train and employ young people; support civil society organizations aiming at creating a network of services for care leavers in order to strengthen the role of civil society.
- Best practices: Amici dei Bambini's support in creating and running the activities of a local care leavers group in Kenya (Kenya Network of Care Leavers).
- Gender equality: provide special support to young girls leaving care at risk of sexual exploitation, early pregnancy and gender discrimination.
- Child health: guarantee free access to health care to care leavers.

Additional recommendations:

- Each State to implement the 2009 General Assembly resolution containing the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (in particular, section VII.E "Support for after care").
- To support family reintegration, family support and strengthening, foster families, national and inter-country adoption as alternatives to

[1] See Amici dei Bambini, *Young Care Leavers and Social Inclusion: Guidelines: Life after Institutional Care* (2009); Eurochild, *Children in Alternative Care, National Surveys* (2010).

institutionalization in order to reach a stable family solution for children without parental care and reduce the number of care leavers.

- To support the production and use of research providing technical and practical information about the target.

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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Priests for Life, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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10-34521 (E) 070610

Please recycle

Statement

We cannot speak about gender equality and women's empowerment without recognizing the unique role of women in shaping the future. While the annual ministerial review is being held, it is absolutely vital that we bear in mind what equality means and what it does not mean. Our guide must be fundamental human rights.

Empowerment begins with survival. All our rights, agreements and laws mean nothing if individual lives are not respected and protected. If empowerment is defined as the ability to take the lives of those who are inconvenient or otherwise in our way, it is a tool of oppression. Oppression is precisely what the United Nations was founded to oppose and prevent. We must be careful to ensure that programmes do not seek to empower one group, class, or gender at the expense of another's existence.

Today, we see evidence of the wrong kind of empowerment all around us. Over 40 million babies worldwide die each year by an act some regard as empowering: abortion. Results are staggering and ominous. In many countries, legalization of abortion has not resulted in women's liberation; it has resulted in their elimination through abortion.

Emerging gender imbalances in the populations of Southern and Eastern Asian nations are alarming and have profound implications for future regional stability. Not only do these countries face male-dominated societies, they will face the economic consequences of a dramatically ageing and shrinking workforce in the not-too-distant future. Sex-selective abortion, which is the means by which women are being eliminated in these countries, is bringing inequality and instability where it was supposed to bring equality and empowerment.

What women need is not elimination of their daughters and sons; it is availability of procreative medical care and education. Problems are not solved by taking the lives of those who have problems or those who are perceived to be the problems. The presence of skilled birth attendants, adequate nutrition and access to health care will reduce maternal deaths and strengthen the next generation. Fertility literacy will empower women with little expense.

Options that truly empower are options that affirm life. As the mother of nine children, six living, one miscarried and two aborted, I know which of my actions were empowering and which were destructive.

As one who lost a father and an uncle in America's civil rights struggles, I know that those who fight equality feel justified to take others' lives, but that those who seek equality never do. What nations must offer women is life through procreative care, not the false hope that destroying their children will make their lives better.

True equality and empowerment, then, begins with the proposition that every person be regarded with equal respect and be protected under the law regardless of colour, sex, age, condition of dependency or stage of life. With these principles as its guide, the United Nations can serve the women of the world; indeed, it can serve the world.

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Annual ministerial review on the theme "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women"

Statement submitted by Association tunisienne des mères, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34527 (E) 110610

Please recycle

Statement

Women's economic empowerment

The empowerment of women and girls is essential to the achievement of development, peace and security and human rights in all our regions. In the current economic climate, no country can afford to underutilize women's skills and talents. That is why a key focus for us is increasing the number of women in leadership and governance positions. The major progress has been in access to education and employment at all levels.

The main objective of our non-governmental organization is to support and advocate women's rights whether in urban or in rural regions, working inside and abroad on women's issues, sustainable development and solidarity. Information and communications technology contributes towards fulfilling women's values and rights as full human beings who have an effective role in achieving sustainable development.

Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women is a central means for reaching all the other Millennium Development Goals. We can promote equality between men and women's economic empowerment by exhorting many active participants to carry the torch and pass it on to others. In this context, we have to: (a) empower women and families, in particular girls, and place them at the centre of poverty-reduction policies; (b) take action towards reducing the gender gap in access to information and communications technology resources by creating specialized information and communications technology centres for women and families, increasing the availability of and access to computer skills training and to the Internet; (c) work on removing gender barriers in education and training and promoting equal employment opportunities in information and communications technology-related fields for women and families; (d) make computer education compulsory in schools; (e) develop educational and training programmes using information and communications technologies to eradicate illiteracy and poverty; (f) facilitate access and use of information and communications technology to improve economic conditions and eliminate poverty and illiteracy among people, in general, and women in particular; and (g) encourage partnerships between women in politics, business and development.

It is worth noting that in Tunisia, many amendments have been introduced and have enriched the code of personal status, especially those related to the employability of women. New policies have been established to fight against unemployment in order to help graduate students have a paid part-time job inside associations. Legislations and mechanisms have helped the promotion of women's empowerment, from simple equality to active partnerships that guarantee the launching of a balanced civil society.

Milestones in the advancement and empowerment of Tunisian women

1956: Foundation of the National Union of Tunisian Women

1957: Tunisia ratifies the Night Work (Women) Convention

1958: Education reform: the right to education is granted to children of both sexes, from ages 6 to 16

1959: Proclamation of the Tunisian Constitution: equality of rights and duties between men and women, women are granted the right to vote and to stand for elections

1959: Tunisia ratifies the Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation

1966: The Labour Code is instituted, addressing non-discrimination between men and women in !abour

1967: Tunisia ratifies the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage, and Registration of Marriages

1967: Tunisia ratifies the Convention on the Political Rights of Women

1969: Tunisia ratifies the Convention against Discrimination in Education

1985: Tunisia ratifies the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

1989: Consolidation of the Centre for Research, Studies, Documentation and Information on Women

1990: Foundation of National Chamber of Women Heads of Enterprises

1990: Foundation of the National Federation of Tunisian Women Farmers

1991: Schooling is compulsory and free of charge for children of both sexes, from ages 6 to 16

1992: Creation of the secretariat of State and National Council for Women and the Family

1992: Foundation of the Tunisian Mothers' Association

1993: Creation of the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs

1993: Creation of the Observatory on the Condition of Women in Tunisia at the Centre for Research Studies, Documentation and Information on Women

1993: The Fund for the Payment of Alimonies and Divorce Pensions

1993: Amendment to the Personal Status Code, instituting the principle of co-responsibility in family affairs, amendment to the Labour Code, the Penal Code and the Code of Nationality

1995: Promulgation of the Child Protection Code, ensuring the protection of the rights of children in general and girls in particular

1998: Promulgation of the right to choose the system of joint property between spouses

1998: Tunisian women can, by right, give their family names to their children of unknown parentage; the father's name is given to the child on basis of genetic fingerprinting

1999: Institution of Tahar Haddad prize for the enhancement of women's images in the media

2000: Creation of the National Commission for the Advancement of Rural Women

2001: Amendment to the Code of Nationality by virtue of which women may legally transmit their nationality to their children born of a non-Tunisian father, if the latter is deceased or legally irresponsible

2003: The quota of women candidates to the legislative and municipal elections on the Constitutional Democratic Rally list increases to 25 per cent

2004: Declaration of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 1994+10

2005: Access to information and communications technology for women (Beijing+10)

2006: Mothers in jail may deliver their babies out of prison

2006: Celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Personal Status Code and decision for age of vote to be 18

2007: Two thirds of salary for mothers working part-time, thereby keeping their social advantages

2008: Women in decision-making positions increased to 30 per cent

2009: Declaration of the 2010 Year of Youth, and decision for age of marriage to be 18

Women in technology

- Women in technology empowers women and expands their participatioa in the workforce by providing them with training opportunities in business planning, professional development and information technology
- In Tunisia, the programmes also aim to train local women's organizations to become financially sustainable, support current workforce demands and empower women to play an integral role in shaping their country's future
- Training for women, women's professional development networks and business planning for non-governmental organizations

In conclusion, we have to say that we must redouble our efforts to fight discrimination against women since it remains the major barrier to the empowerment of women and girls.

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Statement submitted by World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Please recycle

Statement

The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts believes that, by placing the girl child at the centre of all development efforts, families, communities and nations can move out of poverty and towards prosperity. All available evidence indicates that, by ensuring girls and young women are empowered and valued, efforts to implement internationally agreed goals and commitments, including the Millennium Development Goals, are much more likely to succeed.

Nearly half the world's population is under the age of 25, and over 1.2 billion are between the ages of 10 and 19 years old. An estimated 87 per cent of the world's adolescents live in countries affected by poverty, hunger, disease and violence. Girls and young women suffer disproportionately, owing to a lack of ambition and commitment from most countries in their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and to develop and implement specific gender and youth policies.

Access to education and quality education in particular still has a significant gender bias. Seven in every 10 of the world's hungry are girls and women. Climate change, lack of water and the crisis in fisheries and other natural resources are reducing food security worldwide. As food prices rise, hunger and poverty affect more people, with women and the young most at risk and girls as the last priority. Restrictive cultural practices limit girls' opportunities, constrain their roles in society and put them at risk for illness, injury, neglect and violence. Pandemics such as AIDS and malaria continue to impact more directly on the survival chances of women and girls, and over three million girls a year still suffer the trauma and long-term consequences of female genital mutilation.

Yet we know that girls and young women are the most crucial groups in our communities if we want to ensure opportunities for all and guarantee a sustainable future for humankind. There are more than 600 million girls living in the developing world, and one quarter of the population in Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa are girls aged 10 to 24. Transforming the lives of girls and young women is the beginning of a ripple effect. Empowering girls and the women they will become pushes entire families and communities out of poverty and away from hunger. Educated girls and young women earn more money, start their families later and have fewer children. When girls understand their own health and their rights, whole communities are healthier and safer. When girls are free from sexual violence, coercion and destitution, they are free from sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. When they are educated about sexual and reproductive health, their children are born healthy. Empowered girls become women who invest in their families and start a process of education and care that breaks the poverty cycle and changes family and community perceptions of girls from being a burden to being valued and worthy. Girls and young women are the hidden potential of a nation's economy and it is time that society and Governments recognize, engage and nurture this potential.

Despite knowing that investment in girls is the most powerful response to many of the dilemmas facing humankind, international progress in implementing and achieving the Millennium Development Goals is appallingly slow and, when directly concerning the girl child, often even slower. Less than half a cent of every

United States dollar spent on international assistance programmes is invested directly in girls.

Through its mission to enable girls and young women to discover their fullest potential as responsible citizens of the world, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts is already placing the girl child at the centre of the solution. Education and leadership programmes, community action and advocacy campaigns reach out to 10 million girl guides and girl scouts and their communities in 145 countries. In order to rapidly and significantly strengthen and improve national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals, the organization recommends that the international community, Governments and civil society ensure that the girl child is placed at the centre of all development efforts, including policymaking, budgeting, governance and projects.

To rapidly improve the status of the girl child and unlock her potential, the international community, Governments and civil society need to focus on two areas: girls' empowerment and integration in decision-making at all levels; and education and training, especially on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Girls' empowerment and participation in decision-making at all levels

Discrimination against girls and young women can be based on class, race, ethnicity and age. Barriers include unequal power relations, limited opportunities for education, inadequate access to health care and services, cultural biases and poor economic conditions. As a result, girls and young women are disenfranchised and marginalized. They are subject to violence and abuse. Domestic violence causes more deaths and injuries for girls and young women aged 15 to 44 than malaria, war, traffic accidents and cancer combined.

Girls' empowerment entails a process whereby girls gain more control over their lives, become active and valued members of their communities, and are able to make informed choices about issues that directly affect them. Girls and young women are especially excluded from decision-making processes, an absence that continues into womanhood with, for example, only 17 per cent of parliamentary seats across Africa being held by women.

Inclusion in decision-making and girls' empowerment go hand in hand. When girls and young women have the opportunity to identify the problems that affect their lives and, most importantly, find and implement the solutions, it builds their self-confidence and encourages them to value the positive impact they can have on the lives of others. If citizenship and community action are learned and practiced as girls, the women they become will be compassionate and active citizens.

World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts calls on the international community, national Governments and civil society to empower girls by:

- Providing a safe and supportive environment in which girls and young women can cultivate their own set of values and grow in confidence
- Increasing commitment and action on empowering girls and young women as a priority in policy and budget decisions
- Advocating that the media, including new communications technologies, promote positive images of women and girls

- Involving men and boys in dialogues on gender roles and encouraging positive interaction with women and girls
- Tackling cultural gender discrimination and promoting gender equality

World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts calls on the international community and national Governments to ensure that girls and young women are included in all decision-making processes by:

- Ensuring the right to freedom of expression and access to information for girls and boys on an equal basis
- Ensuring children, particularly girls, have access to decision-making processes at all levels
- Recognizing children, particularly girls, as powerful agents of change in all areas of society
- Building an intergenerational partnership based on mutual trust and respect and the development of shared goals
- Ensuring equal representation of girls in all formal and informal decision-making bodies
- Challenging the role of young men in society so that they take responsibility for their own activities and develop equal relationships with young women

Education and training, especially on sexual reproductive health and rights

Seventy percent of the world's 130 million out-of-school children are girls, and there are 42 million fewer girls than boys in primary school. Girls who miss out on primary education make up two thirds of the world's 875 million illiterate people, and every year of schooling lost represents a 10 to 20 per cent reduction in girls' future incomes.

Cultural and patriarchal family structures tend to prioritize the needs of boys over girls. Economic hardship can mean many parents often co-opt their children, especially girls, as additional labour resources. Other obstacles to girls' education include a shortage of school space, lack of female teachers, long distances to travel, unaffordable fees, cultural norms that reinforce women's traditional roles, and violence.

Social and economic conditions around the world also have a significant impact on the health of girls and young women. Twenty-seven per cent of girls aged 15 to 19 in sub-Saharan Africa are married, and 28 per cent give birth by age 18. Every year, some 14 million adolescent girls give birth. Consequently, pregnancy complications and childbirth are the leading causes of mortality among girls between the ages of 15 and 19.

The AIDS epidemic has a disproportionate impact on women and young girls, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where three women are HIV-infected for every two men. Among young people (15 to 24 years of age), that ratio increases to three young women for every young man.

Sex is still a taboo topic and sexual education remains controversial in many countries. It is often difficult for girls and young women to get accurate and reliable information about sex and sexuality and to be able to talk freely and confidently

about issues they face, including birth control, pregnancy outside of marriage, teenage pregnancy. premarital sex, morality, abstinence and sexually transmitted infections. This all translates into an urgent need for comprehensive sex education, which enables girls and young women to understand their rights and make informed choices about their own lives.

To meet the educational needs of girls and young women, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts recommends recognizing the role of non-formal education provided by independent youth organizations in education policies, budgets and national frameworks.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) definition of education includes three distinct types of education: formal; informal; and non-formal, whereby non-formal education is organized educational activity outside the established formal system that is intended to serve an identifiable learning clientele with identifiable learning objectives. Non-formal education makes a significant contribution to the full personal and social development of an individual.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has identified that involvement in girls' organizations over extended periods has a positive impact on girls' civic participation and in counteracting societal pressures.

World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts calls on the international community, national Governments and civil society to ensure girls' free, quality and comprehensive education by:

- Supporting organizations involved in the promotion of the education of girls and young women
- Increasing political commitment to give women's and girls' education higher priority
- Introducing poverty-reduction strategies to ensure that the right to education is the right of every child
- Eliminating gender discrimination, including through the promotion of educational programmes that challenge traditional attitudes of men and boys toward women and girls
- Providing universal access to basic social and education services
- Recognizing non-formal education as a positive method of learning
- Providing girls and young women with appropriate education, information, skills and access to health services and counselling to enable informed and responsible health choices, including non-formal education programmes for the social, personal and sexual development of girls and young women
- Providing young women with opportunities to be involved in the planning, delivering and evaluation of sexual education
- Supporting youth organizations, which provide safe spaces for girls and young women to discuss sex, health and rights free from discrimination.

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Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Center for Health and Gender Equity, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34557 (E) 140610

Please recycle

Statement

The world community has reached a consensus on the importance and centrality of women's lives to development. Building on the United Nations Decade for Women, agreements made at Cairo, Beijing and Copenhagen, and the Millennium Development Goals explicitly and implicitly acknowledge the importance of gender equality and human rights within the eight Goals. The Goals represent a critical shift in the world's approach to underdevelopment; however, a coordinated approach to alleviating poverty, illness and inequality holds much greater promise than addressing each problem separately. The urgency of this shift is exposed by the woman or girl whose poverty, lack of education and unequal status in family and society have made her vulnerable to HIV and maternal death, and more likely to suffer the loss of a child.

The Center for Health and Gender Equity is a United States-based non-governmental organization that seeks to ensure that United States foreign policy and programmes promote sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls worldwide. A clear message has emerged from our analysis and from interactions with women's groups worldwide: the United States and other donor nations must address the eight Millennium Development Goals as interrelated pieces of a whole, and attention to women's inequality and human rights must be made central to all of them.

The world has a tremendous opportunity to reach the Millennium Development Goals, but this opportunity could be shattered unless Governments take immediate action to advance efforts to promote gender equality for women. Too often, the role of gender is deemed relevant for just two of the Goals: Goal 5, on maternal health, and Goal 3, on gender equality. In fact, the world will fail to meet Goals 1 through 8 unless Governments prioritize women and girls in each of the eight goals.

Putting women at the centre of development does not diminish the lives and realities of men and boys. Rather, putting women at the centre of development recognizes that women form the vast majority, 70 per cent, of the world's poor and oppressed, and that addressing their needs and conditions will ensure that every member of society is taken into account.

Donor Governments must lead the way and advance an integrated and coordinated approach to development that is centred on women and girls, for whom multiple goals converge. They must confront poverty by tackling the gender discrimination and violence that hinders access by women and girls to education, land and employment. They must address the social and economic factors that keep girls from school, if universal primary education is to be achieved. Increasing women's and adolescent girls' access to sexual and reproductive health services is critical to combating HIV, improving maternal, newborn and child health, and maintaining health and well-being.

We call upon all Governments to: address gender inequality as a key component of strategies and programmes to achieve each of the Millennium Development Goals; engage civil society, particularly women's health and rights groups, in designing, implementing and monitoring programmes to address the Goals; and develop an integrated approach to all of the Goals, ensuring coordination across sectors.

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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Center for Reproductive Rights, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34533 (E) 140610

Please recycle

Statement

The Center for Reproductive Rights welcomes the decision of the Economic and Social Council to dedicate the 2010 annual ministerial review to examining progress towards the Millennium Development Goals through the lens of gender equality and empowerment. Nowhere is the need for this gender lens clearer than in regard to Goal 5: improve maternal health. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 536,000 women died of pregnancy and childbirth-related complications in 2005. It is estimated that another 10 million women suffer from chronic injuries, infection, disease and disability related to pregnancy and childbirth every year.

Preventable maternal mortality is a form and symptom of discrimination against women and thus must be addressed through programmes that respect human rights and promote equality and empowerment. Brazil is a case in point: according to WHO, Brazil has a maternal mortality ratio of 110 deaths per 100,000 live births. While the Government of Brazil calculates that the maternal mortality ratio in 2005 was 53.4 deaths per 100,000 live births, these numbers are still unacceptably high. These high rates persist despite the fact that the country's public health system guarantees access to free services, and hospital births account for 96 per cent of all births.

The situation of maternal mortality in Brazil is characterized by rights violations and inequality at all levels. The quality of care in health facilities is often shockingly poor. Many medical practitioners continue to rely on unnecessary, painful and potentially harmful delivery practices, and studies have documented women's complaints of neglect and verbal abuse by health-care providers during labour. Owing to Brazil's restrictive abortion law, many women cannot access safe abortion or post-abortion care and thus more than 9 per cent of maternal deaths are caused by unsafe abortion.

Furthermore, Brazil's referral systems are purported to function so poorly that women in many parts of the country struggle to find a hospital bed when they are ready to give birth. The number of hospital beds nationwide declined between 1986 and 2005, and regional disparities in hospital capacity and the distribution of basic and emergency obstetric-care facilities persist. These regional disparities are perpetuated by a public funding system that has struggled to distribute funds based on actual health needs and has instead favoured the wealthier regions of the South and South-East, to the detriment of poorer regions. Studies also demonstrate that Afro-descendant and indigenous women are disproportionately at risk for maternal mortality, a fact that is driven by direct and indirect discrimination in accessing maternal health care.

The case of Brazil exemplifies the need for countries to adopt a human rights-based approach to maternal mortality that includes:

- Investment of resources to improve the accessibility, acceptability, affordability and quality of maternal health-care services and referral systems, particularly in poor and rural areas
- Efforts to recognize and address socio-economic, racial, ethnic and other factors that contribute to differential vulnerability to maternal mortality
- Effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms for maternal mortality

- Expanded access to safe, legal abortion and post-abortion care

The Center's full statement is available from http://reproductiverights.org/ecosoc.

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Statement submitted by Women's Board Educational Cooperation Society, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34545 (E) 140610

Please recycle

Statement

The issue of women having the same rights as men and being empowered to claim them, as it relates to the achievement of the internationally agreed goals and commitments, is very relevant to Nigeria. The size of the female population is almost the same as that of the male; and developing women's rights is at the heart of achieving development.

This year marks the tenth and fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, respectively. The situation on the ground is far from the landmark expected. Goals 2 and 3 focus on women's empowerment. There is no empowerment that is not based on education. Looking at the figures posted on the Millennium Development Goals Indicators website (www.mdgs.un.org, accessed in July 2009), we read that the net enrolment of children in primary school is just 65.2 per cent of the total number of children; 61 per cent of the total population of girls enrol in primary school, while the figure for boys is 69.3 per cent.

The same source reports that the gender disparity index in secondary school enrolment is 0.81; although the proportion is not much higher than in primary school, it shows the predominance of boys attending school.

Girls living in rural areas suffer more as most of the time they are not favoured when a choice has to be made owing to lack of funds as to whom to enrol. Often, parents in such cases send the girls to towns and cities to stay with people who offer to train them in exchange for help with housework; unfortunately, these people often do not keep their promise.

It is vital to remove barriers, such as financial constraints (cost of books, uniforms and transport), cultural practices and traditional beliefs, that prevent the girl child from receiving the minimum standards of a good education.

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Statement submitted by Centre for Social Research, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34551 (E) 140610

Please recycle

Statement

In the face of the global economic slowdown, it has become evident that the vulnerability of developing and rising economies has to be addressed more efficiently. Obviously, as has happened in India, the most affected sections of society are always the poorest, especially women, who mostly work in the informal sector, with unsafe working conditions, low earnings and irregular employment. Here, international institutions, such as the Economic and Social Council, play a vital role in renegotiating global financial policies, suggesting actions to promote honest practices and framing development policies in favour of marginalized sections of societies, such as women.

Centre for Social Research, through its long-standing and relentless work in India to further the social, economic and political empowerment of women, highlights the importance of taking affirmative steps, such as quotas, towards the inclusion of women in political processes and ensuring that the needs of both sexes are addressed. Centre for Social Research, along with the women's movement in India, has lobbied for nearly a decade for the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill, which provides for 33 per cent representation of women in Parliament. Over the past two years, we partnered with the United Nations Democracy Fund and the Government of India to build the leadership capacities of 1,000 women active in politics across the country.

We feel that women's political leadership should be strengthened in terms of realizing the agenda of people-centred and sustainable development and working towards the elimination, in law and in reality, of discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, caste and age. Democratic freedoms, such as freedom of expression, media, opinion, peaceful assembly and association, are necessary vehicles for women's full political participation. In countries where religion and culture impose numerous social restrictions and impinge on State laws, women experience more difficulties in accessing education and engaging in the public political space. The fulfilment of basic survival and social needs, economic independence and freedom from family and community violence are equally crucial requirements in women's realization of their full potential.

As far as the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women are concerned, these will fail if they are not turned into effective policies and actions. Gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting are the central measures that should be taken up by national Governments to allow women an equal share of development. Gender mainstreaming efforts integrate gender perspectives and the goal of gender equality in government policymaking, planning, implementation and evaluation. It also makes Governments more efficient in serving the needs of their citizens by ensuring that even seemingly neutral policies and programmes take into account women's concerns and needs right at the outset. Further, gender-responsive budgeting helps to increase government expenditures on social services that benefit mostly women and children and to steer government priorities towards the "care" economy, such as health and nutrition, education and other family and community services.

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Statement submitted by Korea Institute of Brain Science, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34563 (E) 140610

Please recycle

Statement

Empowering women through brain education

In an event entitled "Empowering Women through Brain Education", organized by the Korea Institute of Brain Science, on 11 March 2010 at the Church Center for the United Nations, discussions centred on the role of brain education and empowerment of women, in preparation for the 2010 annual ministerial review on implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women. The meeting drew broad participation from academics, non-governmental organizations, clinicians and parliamentarians. It provided innovative ideas on how brain education can provide a platform for advancing changes in attitudes towards women and their empowerment. In their analysis, participants recognized that, despite some progress, many obstacles remain, limiting the empowerment of women. From an early age, religion, culture and education have a strong influence on how women and men see their roles in society.

Women's and men's personal attitudes and beliefs are critical in effecting change. Religion and tradition play an influential part in how men and women see their roles and how they integrate change into their lives. New patterns of thinking, believing and acting need to build on existing modes of thought and behaviour. Brain education can, in this regard, play an important role.

There was general recognition that promoting gender equality and empowering women (Goal 3) will contribute to achieving all the other Millennium Development Goals, from reducing poverty and hunger to saving children's lives, improving maternal health, ensuring universal education, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

Case studies and personal experiences of participants enriched the discussions on the value of brain education in changing deep-rooted cultural preconceptions that limit the individual's power to make progressive changes. The essential five steps of brain education were demonstrated as a means to help women take action and create meaningful lives. Improvements in education and understanding brain function were one dimension, but several speakers focused on the legal and political side of the equation to support growth and eliminate the abuse and suffering of women. Constitutional and political changes are needed in many countries to open the door for more widespread participation by women. Continued support of the international community was recognized as particularly important. Several outreach projects were presented, including global initiatives such as Brain Education Online, the Earth Citizen Movement and brain tests online.

Recommendations of the meeting included:

- Promoting brain education as an effective tool to change deep-rooted cultural preconceptions that limit the individual's power to make progressive changes
- Mobilize the international community to focus on improving the status of women and gender equality in some of the poorest countries

In summary, there was general agreement on the fundamental necessity of working together at the community and individual levels. Global change will happen when we use our brains to our fullest potential through education about the brain and taking action to realize our personal visions.

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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34573 (E) 140610

Please recycle

Statement

The agreement and commitment by Governments at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in 1995, led to the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 12 critical areas of concern — a visionary document with clear, committed and deliverable actions.

Again in 2000, at the review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, additional commitment was undertaken at a global level, including the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). These landmark documents were seen as some of the most positive responses by Governments globally and, if implemented fully, could address gender inequalities and promote the empowerment of women at the local, national and global levels.

Although the internationally agreed development goals and commitments do not have timescales or measured steps to mainstream actions, the women's movement recognizes the reporting accountability of Governments through such mechanisms as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and subsequent reviews of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Unfortunately, since 2000, action has been fragmented; the momentum gained from 1995 to 2000 seems to have faded. Many women have experienced a reversal with regard to their rights; Governments continue to ignore international treaties, conventions and commitments; and, depending where one lives, positive gains have created an imbalance in gender equality and empowerment for women.

Women in Northern Ireland can fully appreciate this irony. Throughout the conflict, most women were the source of stability within communities; yet, following the peace process, resolution 1325 (2000) was not implemented. This has resulted in an imbalance in gender equality in decision-making responsibilities, especially at the political level. This is the issue for many women in or emerging from conflict; there is an urgent need to underpin the principles of resolution 1325 (2000) through Government mainstreaming actions.

Northern Ireland Women's European Platform would like to make the following recommendations, if internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women are to have an impact:

- To reach immediate international agreement on four to five key global issues, with guaranteed impact and strict timescales
- To provide a user-friendly system and resources for non-governmental organizations to monitor and report to the United Nations on the internationally agreed goals
- To set global targets and timescales on delivery of further key issues over the next three years
- To establish and implement stronger sanctions on countries that continue to ignore conventions or treaties relating to gender equality and empowerment of women
- To assist Member States in identifying and creating international measurable steps to ensure mainstreaming of actions

- To move to establish a fully functioning and funded gender entity with the power to monitor, support, recommend and deliver key policies to address gender equality and empowerment of women
- To encourage Member States to commit to another world conference on women, with the total assurance that it would not weaken the Beijing Platform for Action or the Beijing +5 outcome.

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Statement submitted by Salesian Missions, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34685 (E) 110610

Please recycle

Statement

Legal empowerment of those living in poverty: an important protection for women

Much has been written about the feminization of poverty and how this has negatively impacted families and societies. Many point to the expansion of microcredit and microfinancing as a means of helping women rise above subsistence living. In the various plans and procedures that have been proposed to address poverty, what has often been neglected is confronting in earnest the systemic structures that exclude women from having a true voice and being recognized as equal human beings. The time to address this inequity is now. It must be addressed by and enshrined in law. The laws, in turn, must be promulgated and enforced.

The Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor found that 4 billion people around the world are prevented from improving their lives and moving out of poverty because they are excluded from the rule of law. Many of these excluded individuals are women. The legal empowerment of women living in poverty can be a necessary condition to create an enabling environment for providing sustainable livelihoods and eradicating poverty.

The need for legal empowerment arises from discrimination and inequalities in women's access to and ownership of land and property, the roles they hold in the labour market and exclusionary inheritance practices in some societies. It is clear that it is not the total absence of assets or lack of work that holds women back, but the fact that the assets and work are insecure, unprotected and far less productive than they could be. Women constitute half the world's population and produce 60 to 80 per cent of the food in developing countries. They are increasingly responsible for rural households. However, they own less than 10 per cent of the world's property. Article 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights speaks of property rights as a fundamental human right; yet, women have legal and cultural obstacles that inhibit or remove this right. This injustice has severe negative consequences for women, families and society at large, and should be corrected.

Empowering women with property rights has been shown to be a strong force for change, helping communities to overcome poverty and malnutrition. Ensuring that women have effective property rights strengthens families and businesses because, as women earn more, they tend to spend a larger percentage of their income on keeping their children healthy and well-fed.

Many women who do not work in agriculture form the backbone of the informal economy in many regions. But informal institutions can leave them vulnerable to corruption, exploitation, bureaucratic meddling and criminals. Economic transactions remain unpredictable, insecure and limited.

We encourage all Governments and major stakeholders to heed and enforce the recommendations of the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor, providing for the protection of the legal identity and rights of women and girls, especially in the areas of land and business ownership.

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Social and human rights questions: social development

Statement submitted by Brothers of Charity, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-35824 (E) 110610

Please recycle

Statement

No health without mental health

Brothers of Charity is a strong international partner supporting human rights for mental health in developing and emerging countries.

Since its founding in the early nineteenth century, the organization has been advocating that mental health care should become an integral part of primary health care. In Belgium, Brothers of Charity has developed a network of mental health care in the field of prevention, treatment and care, with adapted programmes for those with acute and chronic psychiatric problems.

Brothers of Charity tries to eliminate the existing discrimination against people with a mental illness, both in society and in health-care institutions. As an international organization, it is present in 30 countries. Local chapters run programmes adapted to specific geographical and cultural contexts. The congregation is still growing, especially in Asia and Africa. The experience of Brothers of Charity in those 30 countries highlights the need to continue the difficult task of integrating mental health care in a country's general health-care system.

The organization's strategy to improve mental health care in low-income countries is based on its vision of love and compassion for the poor and sick. The strategy has five main goals: (a) changing the general perception of and attitudes towards psychiatric illness and psychiatric patients; (b) integrating the care of psychiatric patients into existing general health-care programmes; (c) developing adapted treatment and care for different types of mental diseases at different levels; (d) training local health-care workers in mental health care as the cornerstone; and (e) building a strong international structure and organization, focused on quality, continuity and solidarity.

The Superior General of the organization, Brother René Stockman, emphasizes how mental health is important to the overall approach of the Millennium Development Goals and to the struggle against poverty in general. With its basic attitude of love, Brothers of Charity has developed great competence in the field of mental health care worldwide. Love and professionalism are not in opposition to each other, but are logically related. It is through this professionalism that the organization can show society that people with a mental disorder are also human beings; they are ill people, who need our care and our support. That is precisely the reason why its strategy always starts with the care of chronic psychiatric patients, because those people are the most forgotten ones. By taking care of them, the organization can have a direct impact on the perception of and attitudes towards mental illness.

By trying to bring chronic psychiatric patients back into society, Brothers of Charity gives a strong signal to society to change its perception of and attitudes towards psychiatric patients, who are often seen as possessed people and are therefore marginalized and stigmatized.

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Statement submitted by Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-35887 (E) 110610

Please recycle

Statement

End impunity for sexual and gender-based violence

Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development welcomes this annual ministerial review of the implementation of goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women. In addressing gender, the United Nations development agenda makes particular reference to sexual exploitation, violence and abuse in situations of armed conflict, and highlights the importance of both adopting and enforcing legislation on violence against women.

Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development recently concluded a review of the legal frameworks for responding to sexual and gender-based violence of five countries in the Great Lakes region of Africa, namely Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. It reviewed legislation, judicial practices, police procedures and health infrastructure. Disappointingly, many gaps were found in the national legal frameworks and even greater failures in implementation.

Legislation: While international and regional human rights instruments, protocols, declarations and resolutions adopt a stern approach to sexual and gender-based violence, domestic legislation has rarely been effected.

Judicial practices: Judicial decisions on sexual and gender-based violence are influenced by patriarchal norms, many cases are withdrawn before coming to court, and, even when perpetrators are found guilty, strong penalties are rarely imposed. However, when specific laws or sexual crimes are in place, the broad discretion of the courts is largely minimized and stricter sentences are imposed.

Police procedures: Police departments are often unaware that sexual and gender-based violence is a crime; they have little empathy and are not taught how to deal with survivors. In nearly all the countries reviewed, most prosecutions of perpetrators fail as a result of inadequate investigations.

Health infrastructure: The unavailability of health services in many areas of the countries greatly compromises the ability to collect forensic evidence on sexual and gender-based violence and affects the physical, mental and emotional well-being of survivors.

In situations of conflict, both the incidence of and impunity for sexual and gender-based violence is heightened. Regrettably, we found that, in many cases, even after the conflict ended, little judicial or corrective action against such violence was taken. It continues as an everyday violation. Often, the rape of women and girls soon fades out of national prominence, leaving survivors feeling abandoned by the State. The situation is worst when power ends up in the hands of combatants, who fear being brought to justice themselves.

Fundamentally, the legal frameworks are undermined by societies and cultures that close their eyes to sexual and gender-based violence. In this social context, genuine political will and resource allocation are lacking. Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development believes it is essential to address underlying gender inequalities and power relations between men and women in African countries, if we are ever to end impunity for this type of violence.

We urge all Governments to adopt laws and enforcement mechanisms that promote gender equality and that place the rights of women on a par with those of men in all respects. In particular, we ask the Governments of the Great Lakes region to harmonize all relevant national laws and criminal procedures, in accordance with the provisions of the Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.